

POLICY INTERVENTION BRIEFS > NUTRITION INTERVENTION: FRUIT & VEGETABLE PROMOTION

- The following brief reports the effects of fruit and vegetable promotion policies on the reduction of childhood obesity prevalence in the state of Louisiana, from an evidence-based modeling program.
- Fruit and vegetable promotion policies include media campaigns, local communication, and placement strategies to promote diets rich in fruits and vegetables in order to improve health.

Policy Goals

- Increase fruit and vegetable consumption by making fruits and vegetables more appealing options.
- Encourage *replacing* unhealthy foods for fruits and vegetables.
- Support schools and food retailers that take measures to promote fresh fruits and vegetables.

What Does the Research Tell Us?

- A healthy diet inclusive of fruits and vegetables is important for optimal child growth, weight management, and chronic disease prevention.¹³¹
- Promotion strategies such as nutrition labeling at restaurants, point-of-purchase nutrition information, healthy food marketing, and school-based nutrition education programs show promise to improve healthful diets.¹³²⁻¹³³
- Changing the types of advertising from junk food to healthy food during children's TV programming reinforces healthy eating.¹³⁶

Current Policy Environment in Louisiana

- There are no laws or policies that support statewide mass media campaigns, improve communication, or encourage favorable placement of fruits and vegetables.
- Some school districts have established School Wellness policies that emphasize nutritional education for elementary students. LA Department of Education programs are designed to enhance student wellness, advance nutrition education school-wide, and optimize student exposure to fruit and vegetable promotion.¹⁰⁷

If marketing works for unhealthy foods,⁸⁷ shouldn't communities and industry make a better effort to advertise healthy foods?

The average young person is exposed to 20,00-40,000 ads per year on TV.¹³⁷ TV commercials account for 95% of fast food companies' advertising budgets.¹³⁸

Increased television viewing by children has been linked to lower levels of fruit and vegetable consumption.^{139,140}

In a recent study of children and adolescents in Louisiana, 31.4% of youth reported watching 3-4 hours of TV a day, and 33.3% watched ≥5 hours of TV a day. Higher television viewing time was related to higher obesity and greater cardiometabolic risk.¹⁴¹

WAYS TO SUPPORT

Fruit & Vegetable Promotion

- Increase campaigns that emphasize nutrition education.
- Promote the implementation and use of community and school gardens.
- Implement "healthy restaurant designation" media campaigns.
- Utilize mass media social marketing campaigns to promote fruit and vegetable consumption.
- Emphasize menu labeling in restaurants.
- Utilize effective placement and pricing strategies in grocery stores, convenience stores, schools.
- Support farm-to-table programs and local farmers markets.

Achieving Maximum Intervention Results

- Taking into consideration state policies in place regarding fruit and vegetable promotion in schools, food stores, and restaurants, Louisiana's initial conditions level (0.8%) was determined.⁹⁷
- Maximum intervention (100%) entails a highly effective statewide mass media campaign, attractive point-of-purchase product placement in stores and schools, and marketing efforts for fruits and vegetables in groceries, schools, and restaurant settings.



Projected Effect on Louisiana's Childhood Obesity Prevalence

PRISM Results: Can a Policy Intervention that Promotes Fruit and Vegetable Access Reduce the Prevalence of Childhood Obesity?				
Policy Strength	Maximum (100%)	Maximum (100%)	Moderate (50%)	Moderate (50%)
Year Implemented	2013	2016	2013	2016
% Change [ROU [^]]	0%	0%	0%	0%

[^] ROU refers to the Range of Uncertainty determined by the PRISM sensitivity analysis.

Note: The symbol ↓ signifies that the percent change is negative, and the percent represents a decrease.

- When fruit and vegetable promotion policies are implemented singularly, there is not projected to be a decrease in the level of childhood obesity prevalence.
- Promoting fruits and vegetables will not be an effective policy strategy if measures are not taken to improve the nutritional quality of residents' diets. Simultaneous policies that reduce the amount of junk food purchased and consumed may improve the effectiveness of this type of policy intervention.

Implementing the Policy

It may be surprising that enacting a policy intervention focused on promoting fruits and vegetables is not projected to have an impact on the childhood obesity prevalence in the state. However, this projection demonstrates the need for research of population-level interventions that promote fruit and vegetable consumption while simultaneously making efforts to reduce consumption of unhealthy foods: **replacement** is the critical factor.

Communities across Louisiana are already making significant efforts to increase fruit and vegetable consumption. Along with tackling issues affecting access, many initiatives are multi-faceted in that they provide recipes and cooking instructions for unfamiliar produce. Community and school gardens are becoming more common. Plans for farmers markets are making headway. Initiatives to work with local corner stores by providing economic and infrastructure support to sell and promote produce are materializing. There are many strategies for food retailers to implement the product, price, placement, and promotion framework into marketing healthy foods in their stores.¹⁴² Restaurateurs can also assist in increasing fruit and vegetable consumption of their customers, especially their young customers, by making fresh fruits and vegetables the standard options.



"...marketers and policy makers who are concerned about consumer welfare need to manage product offerings to make it easier for consumers to make better choices...The approach does not generally recommend banning products or eliminating choices. Consumer freedom is preserved, but an understanding of the limitations in consumers' beliefs, preferences, and decisions leads the marketer or policy maker to devise displays, tools, incentives, and promotions that make it easier for consumers to make consumption decisions that support long-term health."¹⁴³ ~Behavioral Economics and the Psychology of Fruit and Vegetable Consumption: A Scientific Overview, 2012

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